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The Impact of Social Capital on Terrorism in West Asia (2007 to 2020)

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

The international image of West Asia, especially after the September 11, 2001 incident, has been strongly linked to terrorism. This has been exacerbated by the emergence of ISIS and its numerous attacks in various parts of the world and the use of extreme violence. Terrorist groups in West Asia generally attract a large population of radical Muslims. Therefore, due to the greater number of terrorist groups and their large number of followers in this region compared to other regions of the world, the intensity of violence and the number of attacks, the terrorist activity of most of these groups is linked to Islam as the dominant ideology in the societies of the region, and thus a certain type of Islamism has become associated with terror-

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ism on a global level. A comprehensive explanation and prevention of terrorism is a very difficult and almost impossible task, however, an attempt is made to consider its various aspects by looking at terrorism from the perspective of social capital as an interdisciplinary concept (political science, sociology and economics). The reason for choosing 2007 as the starting point is, on the one hand, the lack of much of the data required for the previous article, and on the other hand, it is related to the developments of the Arab Spring.

The present study was quantitative in terms of approach; time-based, periodic, and based on secondary data (Legatum and the Global Terrorism Data Center or START, etc.) in terms of data collection. Social capital and terrorism are the independent and dependent variables of the study, respectively. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 22 software.

Our target statistical population is the countries of West Asia, but since their number is large for a single study, we focused on 6 specific samples. Purposive sampling of the type of “sampling to achieve representativeness” was considered appropriate for the research objectives. The purpose of choosing this type of purposive sampling was to ensure that the selected sample was representative of the entire Middle East.

Based on the values obtained between institutional social capital and the intensity of violence, i.e. the correlation coefficient (*-0.605) and the significance level (0.022), it can be argued that there is a significant relationship between these two variables. This indicates that as institutional social capital increases, the intensity of violence by terrorist groups decreases. Also, according to the correlation coefficient (**0.737) and the significance level (0.003) obtained between institutional social capital and the number of attacks, it can be said that as social capital increases at this level, the number of attacks by terrorist groups increases. There was also a significant relationship between international social capital and the number of terrorist groups with a correlation coefficient (**0.707) and a significance level (0.005). This indicates that with the increase in international social capital, the number of terrorist groups also increases. The number of their attacks also increases.

The relationship between social capital and the number of terrorist groups: Based on the best-fit model obtained from the stepwise regression analysis,

the R2 value obtained (0.731) indicates that 73 percent of the variance in the number of terrorist groups is explained by international social capital and international trust. Also, for each unit change in international social capital and international trust, there is a change of about (3.076) and (-2.417) units in the number of terrorist groups, respectively.

The relationship between social capital and the number of terrorist attacks: Based on the best-fit model obtained from the stepwise regression analysis, the R2 value obtained (0.829) indicates that 83 percent of the variance of the number of attacks variable is explained by international trust.

The relationship between social capital and the intensity of violence of terrorist groups: Based on the best-fit model obtained from stepwise regression analysis, the R2 value obtained (0.367) indicates that 37 percent of the variance in the severity of violence variable is explained by institutional participation.

In this study, focusing on social capital and considering different levels of interpersonal, national or institutional and international, and the components of trust, participation and cohesion, it was concluded that different levels and components of social capital have different effects on the number of terrorist groups, the intensity of violence they commit and the number of their attacks. In such a way that with the increase in social capital and international trust, the number of terrorist groups and the number of their attacks increase; because citizens feel that their rulers act against their values and norms. The colonization of regional countries, the issue of Israel and other factors have caused a very negative attitude towards Western countries to form and persist among the people of the region, unlike the rulers of the region. It was also concluded that the upward trend of institutional participation in society reduces the intensity of violence of terrorist groups; because civil society acts as a social shield against them.

Key words: Social capital, trust, participation, cohesion, West Asia.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in conducting this research study.